



## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Reply to Ambassador Robert Barry, Head of the OSCE Afghan Election Support Team**

As delivered by Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
October 21, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is a great pleasure to welcome Ambassador Barry to the Permanent Council, and I would like to begin by thanking him for his report, his excellent and very lively report, and for his successful completion of an important, historic task. Our hats are off to you, Ambassador Barry, and to your entire team.

The OSCE's decision to send an Election Support Team to Afghanistan embodies the very best of what the OSCE is all about. It makes us proud for the OSCE to be an important participant on the international scene. It needs to do important things and the Afghan election effort clearly was very important. The historic election in Afghanistan was, in the truest sense of the term, a confidence and security building measure, and our organization responded to a direct request from the Afghan government to lend support to this effort.

The goal of the mission was to evaluate preparations and voting on election day, and to provide a report to the Afghan authorities on what seemed to work well, where irregularities were encountered, and to offer suggestions on future improvements and follow-up.

At the same time, the OSCE was in Afghanistan to lend moral support to the millions of Afghan men and women who turned out to vote, and to signal to them by our presence that irregularities would be noted and would be looked into. The OSCE presence, and that of other international bodies, was also an important deterrent to those who might have tried to disrupt the voting, or to improperly influence it.

The fact that the elections were conducted with minimal disruption testifies to the utility of the OSCE presence there. Just as it routinely does in so many countries in Europe, the OSCE played an important role in supporting an aspiring democracy to choose its leaders in a free and fair manner.

Mr. Chairman, the successful completion of the Afghan Election Support Team's mission is a real achievement for the OSCE and one that reflects positively on all of us.

Before closing, I'd like to extend well-deserved congratulations not only to Ambassador Barry and his team as I have said, but also to Jan Kubis and to his team, especially Mr. Didier Fau and Mr. Declan Greenway, who undertook the Herculean task of laying the political, administrative and the security foundation for this mission that enabled everyone to return safe and sound.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.